

Small Group Guide: Freedom in Grace

Based on Galatians 2

Key Scripture

Galatians 2:20-21 - "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."

Main Takeaways

1. **Grace Alone Saves** - We cannot add anything to Christ's finished work on the cross
2. **False Teaching Brings Bondage** - Adding requirements to the gospel robs us of joy and peace
3. **Living the Crucified Life** - Our identity is found in Christ, not in our accomplishments or religious activities
4. **Equal Value Before God** - Every believer has the same worth in God's eyes

Discussion Questions

Understanding Grace (15-20 minutes)

1. What stood out to you most from this sermon? Why?
2. Paul warns about adding anything to the gospel of grace. What are some modern-day examples of "Christ plus" teachings you've encountered? (Examples: Christ plus certain spiritual practices, Christ plus perfect attendance, Christ plus specific dress codes, etc.)
3. Read Galatians 1:6-9. Why do you think Paul used such strong language ("let him be accursed") about those who preach a different gospel?

4. The message mentioned that being "slightly off" in our understanding of the gospel can rob us of grace, peace, and joy. Have you experienced this in your own life? Share if comfortable.

Peter's Struggle (15-20 minutes)

5. In Galatians 2:11-14, Paul confronts Peter publicly for his hypocrisy. What was Peter doing wrong, and why was it such a serious issue?
6. Peter was intimidated by the Jewish believers and changed his behavior to please them. When have you been tempted to act differently around certain groups of Christians? What drives that behavior?
7. Even Barnabas, "the son of encouragement," got caught up in this hypocrisy. What does this teach us about the seductive nature of legalism and performance-based faith?

Living the Crucified Life (15-20 minutes)

8. What does it mean practically to say "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me"?
9. Paul says he counted all his religious accomplishments as "loss for Christ" (Philippians 3:4-7). What things might we be tempted to count on besides Christ alone?
 - Religious heritage
 - Church attendance
 - Bible knowledge
 - Service and ministry
 - Moral behavior
10. The sermon stated: "God loves me just as much as He loves you, and He loves you just as much as He loves me." How does believing this truth change the way we relate to other believers?

Practical Application (15-20 minutes)

11. When we sin or fail, what should our response be according to 1 John 2:1? How is this different from living under the burden of the law?
12. The sermon mentioned that Paul no longer felt bound to keep Jewish ceremonial laws and feasts. What religious activities or traditions might we elevate to the level of requirements for being a "good Christian"?
13. How can we tell the difference between:
 - Healthy spiritual disciplines that help us grow vs. legalistic requirements?
 - Living for Christ out of gratitude vs. trying to earn His approval?
14. Paul says in verse 18: "If I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." What "things" might we be tempted to rebuild that keep us from living in grace?

Personal Reflection Questions

(Take 5 minutes of silence for individual reflection)

- Am I trying to add anything to the gospel of grace in my own life?
- Do I truly believe that Christ's work on the cross is sufficient for my salvation?
- Am I living the "crucified life" or am I still trying to establish my own righteousness?
- Where am I being a "people pleaser" like Peter instead of living authentically in grace?

This Week's Challenge

Choose **ONE** of the following:

1. **Grace Audit** - Make a list of things you think make you a "better Christian." Prayerfully examine each one. Which are responses to God's grace vs. attempts to earn it?
2. **Confession & Freedom** - Identify one area where you've been living under self-imposed religious rules. Confess it to God and ask Him to help you experience

freedom in that area.

3. **Encourage Someone** - Like Barnabas (before he stumbled), be a "son/daughter of encouragement" to someone who might be struggling under the weight of performance-based Christianity.
4. **Scripture Memory** - Memorize Galatians 2:20-21 this week. Meditate on what it means to live the crucified life.

Additional Resources

For Further Study:

- Read all of **Galatians** this week (it's only 6 chapters!)
- **Romans 3:21-28** - Righteousness through faith
- **Ephesians 2:8-9** - Saved by grace through faith

Acts References

- **Acts 15:1-2** - Judaizers teaching circumcision requirement
- **Acts 9:26-28** - Paul's first visit to Jerusalem; Barnabas introduces him
- **Acts 10** - Peter's vision and ministry to Cornelius (alluded to)
- **Acts 11** - Barnabas's ministry in Antioch; Agabus's prophecy
- **Acts 15** - Jerusalem Council (extensively referenced)
- **Acts 4** - Introduction of Barnabas

Other New Testament References

- **Philippians 3:4-7** - Paul's credentials and counting them as loss
- **Luke 18** - Parable of Pharisee and tax collector
- **1 John 2:1** - "If we do sin, we have an advocate with the Father"

Questions to Ponder:

- If you knew you couldn't fail, how would you serve God differently?
- What would change in your life if you fully embraced that you are completely loved and accepted by God right now?